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06/11/02 12:15 PM

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cc:

Subject: (Fwd) [AGRO] M-44s and SD Wolf

Thought you would be interested in the following article.

Genetic tests show animal killed in Harding County was wolf

June 10, 2002, 6:19 PM

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) -- An animal killed by a state trapper a year ago in northwest South Dakota was a footloose wolf that probably came from Minnesota, Wisconsin or Michigan, according to a genetic analysis.

After the wolf was killed by a cyanide-loaded device set for coyotes, state and federal officials investigated to determine whether it was a full-blooded wolf or a wolf-dog hybrid.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service tests found that the animal was a wolf that matched the genetic markers of gray wolves from Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan. It was killed in late April last year on a Harding County ranch.

"We've got a pioneering wolf that took off and started roaming and ended up over there and got accidentally killed," said Bob Prieksat, a Fish and Wildlife Service agent in Pierre.

Investigations also determined that the trapper did nothing wrong when he tried to get coyotes and instead got the wolf.

"There's nothing illegal about what happened. It's just an unfortunate deal that happened that nobody could control," Prieksat said.

The gray wolf is listed as an endangered species in South Dakota. Wolves occasionally wander into the state, but federal officials have determined that South Dakota has no habitat that could support a wolf population.

Wolves that wander into South Dakota are protected under an agreement between the state and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. If a wolf was discovered roaming in the state, officials would try to capture it alive and remove it, Prieksat said. Anyone who knew an animal was a wolf and intentionally killed it could be prosecuted for violating federal law, he said.

The accidental killing of the wolf in Harding County will not affect South Dakota's predator control efforts for coyotes, Prieksat said. "One that's accidentally killed, there's nothing anybody can do about it."

The Harding County animal was killed with an M-44, a small spring-loaded device baited with a scent to draw carnivores. When a coyote tugs at it, a lethal dose of cyanide shoots into its mouth and quickly kills it.

The M-44 device was outlawed for general purposes in the 1970s, but the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently began allowing its use by trained farmers, ranchers and others in several states. South Dakota received approval to resume using it in December 2000.

The wolf was killed on a ranch south of Reva. The rancher contacted the state Game, Fish and Parks Department after finding two calves dead in one

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spot. The state trapper then set the M-44 devices and found the wolf on April 26 last year.

A Game, Fish and Parks review said the trapper followed proper procedures, said Andy Lindbloom, state wildlife damage control administrator.

Wendy Keefover-Ring of Sinapu, a Boulder, Colo., organization that promotes the protection and recovery of wolves and other carnivores, said the Harding County case is frustrating. M-44 devices should not be used anywhere because they can kill dogs and other animals and could someday kill a person, she said.

"I don't agree that we should be indiscriminately even killing coyotes because, first of all, it doesn't work. We've been trying to kill coyotes for 150 years in this country and what we've done is extended their range threefold," Keefover-Ring said.

Farmers and ranchers would be better off if they changed their methods for handling livestock, Keefover-Ring said.

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